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SUBJECT: UN INVESTIGATING ALLEGATIONS OF BEATINGS AND
KILLINGS OF DETAINEES BY MONUC PEACEKEEPERS IN 2005

REF: 05 KIN 337 AND PREVIOUS

Classified By: PolOff TNaber, reasons 1.4 b/d.

11. (SBU) MONUC announced May 26 that the UN would conduct a full investigation into allegations of beatings and killings of detainees by MONUC peacekeepers in Ituri in 2005. A previous MONUC investigation had found the peacekeepers used excessive force, but the results were not sent to the UN in New York, and no action was taken against them. The new investigation will be carried out by the UN Office of Internal Oversight (OIOS), which is independent of MONUC.

The events of February 2005

12. (C) On February 24, 2005, MONUC peacekeepers captured 30 suspected militia members in Ituri District, 15 of whom were detained by MONUC's Ituri Brigade (IB), composed of Bangladeshi soldiers. The next day, nine Bangladeshi peacekeepers were killed in an ambush near the town of Ndoki (reftel). On February 27, IB peacekeepers shot and killed one prisoner, wounded another who later died, and allegedly severely beat six others. The peacekeepers claimed the eight had tried to escape.

13. (C) Immediately after the incident, a MONUC military Board of Inquiry met to examine the two deaths. According to a MONUC Human Rights Division (HRD) officer, HRD was not involved in the investigation or its findings. The HRD officer told us June 12 that after the shootings, the remaining detainees were transferred to Bunia prison where they remained for eight months. Although they had been arrested as suspected militia members, no investigation was conducted into their identities, and no charges were filed against them. Upon their release, most returned to small communities outside Bunia.

The current investigation

14. (C) According to the MONUC HRD officer, a letter from someone claiming to represent the surviving victims arrived at MONUC earlier this year. SRSG Swing turned the file over to the OIOS, a UN watchdog agency, for a "full probe." An OIOS officer told us June 14 that the original Board of Inquiry investigation had been done correctly and was "not as bad as everyone said." He said that the new investigation was a top OIOS priority and should be completed in a few months and submitted to USUN in New York.

Comment

15. (C) MONUC is sensitive to the potential that the allegations could undermine peacekeeping efforts. Both the HRD and OIOS officers insisted that our conversations be held strictly confidential and that their names not be used, as they were under strict directions not to discuss the case.
End comment.
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